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## BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES.

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### I.

THERE are "sermons in stones" more pregnant than any fancied by Shakespeare's genius. The secret plucked by Champollion which made the dumb history of Egypt speak, and the acumen of Rawlinson, which deciphered the wedges engraved on the Assyrian cylinders, belong to the glory of one of the more recent sciences. Archæology is now pursued with enthusiasm by scholars of all nations, and it is with more than ordinary interest that we note its results when devoted to unraveling the prehistoric civilization of our own continent. The publication of M. Charnay's researches\* will be welcomed as a valuable contribution to the study of the monuments of Mexico and Central America, and of the historic mysteries hidden behind their sculptured façades.

M. Charnay's expedition was organized under the joint patronage of Mr. Pierre Lorillard, of New York, and of the French Government, and the results seem to have fully justified expectation. The civilization, which has left splendid relics of its presence from the Gila River in the United States to Nicaragua Lake, has awakened keen controversy. "The drums and trappings of conquest after conquest," to use Sir Thomas Browne's noble phrase, swept over this vast region from the time of the mound-builders, if indeed these were the autochthones, to that of the Spanish irruption. Of these waves of population, one, it is understood by consent of most explorers and archæologists, that of the Toltecs, carried with it the rich seed and sediment, lush as the Nilotic flood, of a notable civilization. Whether politically dominant or subject, through all vicissitudes of place and power, the Toltec civilization stamped on the kindred races with which it came in contact the deepest traces of its subjugating genius in the arts of peace and progress. The question of immediate interest concerning this mysterious people is whether it was the sole source of the civilization indicated by the Mexican monuments, or whether its arts commingled with those of other races prior to or concurrent with its own in producing such amazing results. M. Charnay subordinates all other problems to this inquiry. Other students of American antiquities have considered the primal origin of the civilizing force which organized an empire of intricate

\* "The Ancient Cities of the New World. Being Voyages and Explorations in Mexico and Central America from 1857 to 1882." By Désirée Charnay. From the French of J. Gonino and Helen S. Conant. Introduction by Allen Thorndike Rice. New York : Harper & Brothers.

polity, and scattered over thousands of square miles temples and palaces, statues, and mural sculptures, only inferior to those of Egypt and India. Did this force come from Asia at some remote period by the route of Behring's Straits, or through the intermediate stage of some Atlantis or chain of Atlantides, the subsidence of which has sunk "deeper than did ever plummet sound" all trace of the itinerary? Was this civilization strictly indigenous? These questions Mr. Allen Thorndike Rice, in the lucid brief which by its review of the subject in all its wide bearings clears the way for the general reader to a clearer grasp of M. Charnay's researches, touches in common with many others. But M. Charnay, with the practical scientific instincts of his race, declines to hamper himself with insoluble problems, or he treats them only by implication. The question to which he confines himself is clearly within the reach of rational induction—whether the Toltecs were the fountain head of all that was best in the ancient civilization of Mexico and Central America.

The Toltecs, it is believed, came to the valley of Mexico from the north, and founded their empire at Tollan, or Tula, early in the 7th century. After a lapse of 500 years their numbers and power were so broken by civil war and pestilence, that most of them emigrated to the south, settling in Yucatan and Guatemala. Before leaving the valley of Mexico, they had established their arts and civilization and left them as an inheritance to the more savage tribes of their own native Nahoas or Nahuatl stock, who had drifted concurrently with them into the same region, and on whose rugged ferocity they had grafted their own mild and intellectual qualities. A Toltec remnant, however, remained and became again rich and powerful. Of the kindred tribes, that assimilated the Toltec civilization, while adding to it their own more barbaric customs, the Aztec, which had remained for centuries a haughty military and priestly caste amidst their neighbors, rapidly assumed the hegemony, and in the fourteenth century reduced the others to a position of feudal service. It was this monarchy which Cortez overthrew. To the genial religion of the Toltecs, whose favorite diety was Quetzocoatl, the god of the air, worshiped with fruits and flowers, a Saturnian god, symbolical of the golden age of peace and plenty, succeeded the sanguinary cult of Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec Mars, to whom armies of human victims were sacrificed each May, till his temples ran blood in rivers. M. Charnay observes an utter absence of the peculiar sacrificial stone in the temple ruins of those regions where Aztec influence had not been dominant, while on the other hand there is a general identity in the character of the fragments and relics from Aztec land to Maya land in Yucatan. The pyramidal forms given to the basements of edifices, the invariable shape of the monuments after the Toltec model of the *Calli*, the mural ornamentation, the statuary, the works of terra-cotta, the pottery, the overlapping arch forming the vault, the cultus of the cross—all these show incontestably in M. Charnay's view the mold of a common civilization.

In relation to the claims made for the anterior civilization of Yucatan in the Maya race, our explorer finds conclusive evidence against this in the fact that the same customs, institutions, and religion, the same method of recording events and of computing time, and the same arms were common to the tribes of the plateaux and of Yucatan. From Tula, Palpan, Comalcalco and Palenque in the Valley of Mexico to Chichen-Itza, Kabah and Uxmal in Yucatan, and the more mysterious ruins, christened by the explorer, Lorillard Town, the identity of origin seems to be sustained by cumulative proof. M. Charnay has enriched his book with reproductions derived from photographs taken on the spot or papier maché squeezes, wonderfully preserving all the characteristics of bas-relief and other mural ornament. The originals are partly in the Trocadero Museum of Paris, and partly in our own Smithsonian Institute.